

HOW TRANSPARENT IS YOUR ELECTION PROCESS

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Associations and professional societies have specific Bylaw requirements regarding the nomination and election of Officers and Directors.

The Bylaws generally provide that the members elect the Directors for terms that vary from one to three years. Officers are either elected by the members or in certain cases, elected by the Board from the Board membership.

Officers generally serve a one-year term. In some organizations, Officers automatically move up from Vice Chair to Chair Elect and then to Chair.

The Bylaws of the organization establishes a Nominating Committee and provides how the Nominating Committee is appointed and who shall serve on the Nominating Committee.

This is all fairly standard. However, once we get to how the Nominating Committee operates, things change dramatically.

In some organizations, usually trade associations rather than professional societies, the Nominating Committee nominates one candidate for each vacancy and in most instances, the candidates are elected without opposition. Even if the membership has the right to make additional nominations by petition, such petitions are rarely filed.

We represent several national trade associations where the one nominee for each

vacant office presented by the Nominating Committee has not been opposed in over 20 years.

By contrast, professional societies often have several nominees run for each office and elections are hotly contested.

Members of these organizations often raise questions about the nominating process. They demand greater transparency. They raise questions such as:

1. What criteria are used to select members of the Nominating Committee?
2. What criteria does the Nominating committee use in selecting candidates?
3. Does the Nominating Committee send out a notice inviting potential candidates to submit their names as candidates to the Nominating Committee?
4. Has the Association Board approved specific criteria for Officers and Directors?
5. Do the Bylaws establish a reasonable procedure for nominations from the floor or by petition?
6. Does the election process permit all candidates to submit their positions on the issues to the membership?

7. What affirmative steps are taken to present a diverse group of candidates?

These questions are usually raised in organizations where significant groups of members believe that the nomination process has become accessible only to the Association “elite” and unless you are a member of the “in group” you don’t have a chance of being nominated.

As an Association Executive, you should be aware of the internal process issues that exist in your Association regarding association election procedures.

You need to take a leadership role in ensuring that the election and nomination process is transparent and encourages new board members and members who represent all facts of the organization. All of the nominating and election procedures should be set out in an association policy manual.

You should encourage the Association to get rid of the “dead wood” on the Board and encourage diversity at the Board level.

Take time to listen to the membership. If you don’t you may find you have to deal with a revolution and the new regime may want a new Executive Director.